



## Procedures

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For an animation depiction of described procedures below click on each hyper link.

## Cosmetic Dentistry

### Composite Fillings

Composite resin is a filling material designed for aesthetic dental restorations. Formulated to resemble the color of your natural tooth, composite resin is often used for filling dental cavities or bonding front teeth and closing space between two teeth.

A composite (tooth colored) filling is used to repair a tooth that is affected by decay, wear, cracks, fractures, etc. Composite fillings are a mixture of glass or quartz filler in a resin medium that produces a tooth-colored filling. They are sometimes referred to as composites or filled resins.

Composite fillings provide good durability and resistance to fracture in small-to-mid size restorations that need to withstand moderate chewing pressure. Less tooth structure is removed when the dentist prepares the tooth, and this may result in a smaller filling than that of an amalgam.

Composites can also be "bonded" or adhesively held in a cavity, often allowing the dentist to make a more conservative repair to the tooth. As with most dental restorations, composite fillings are not permanent and may someday have to be replaced. They are very durable, and will last many years, giving you a long lasting, beautiful smile.

**How are composite fillings placed?** Composite fillings are usually placed in one appointment. While the tooth is numb, your dentist will remove decay as necessary. The space will then be thoroughly cleaned and carefully prepared before the new filling is placed. If the decay was near the nerve of the tooth, a special medication will be applied for added protection. The composite filling will then be precisely placed, shaped, and polished, restoring your tooth to its original shape and function. It is normal to experience sensitivity to hot and cold when composite fillings are first placed, however this will subside shortly after your tooth acclimates to the new filling. You will be given care instructions at the conclusion of your treatment. Good oral hygiene practices, eating habits, and regular dental visits will aid in the life of your new fillings.

### **Dental Crowns (Caps)**

A dental crown is a tooth-shaped "cap" or covering that is placed over a tooth -encasing the tooth to restore its shape and size, strength, and/or to improve its appearance.

The crowns, when cemented into place, fully encase the entire visible portion of a tooth that lies at and above the gum line.

They are highly durable and will last many years, but like most dental restorations, they may eventually need to be replaced. Porcelain crowns are made to match the shape, size, and color of your teeth giving you a natural, long-lasting beautiful smile.

### **Why Is a Dental Crown Needed?**

A dental crown may be needed in the following situations:

1. To protect a weak tooth (for instance, from decay or root canal) from breaking or to hold together parts of a cracked tooth
2. To restore an already broken tooth or a tooth that has been severely worn down
3. To cover and support a tooth with a large filling when there isn't a lot of tooth left
4. To hold a dental bridge in place
5. To cover misshapened or severely discolored teeth
6. To cover a dental implant

### What Types of Crowns Are Available?

Permanent crowns can be made from all metal, porcelain-fused-to-metal, all resin, or all ceramic.

- **All-resin** dental crowns are less expensive than other crown types.  
However, they wear down over time and are more prone to fractures than porcelain-fused-to-metal crowns.
- **All-ceramic or all-porcelain** dental crowns provide the best natural color match than any other crown type and may be more suitable for people with metal allergies. However, they are not as strong as porcelain-fused-to-metal crowns and they wear down opposing teeth a little more than metal or resin crowns. All-ceramic crowns are a good choice for front teeth.
- **BruxZir** crowns are esthetic chipless non-porcelain crowns ideal for bruxers and grinders. BruxZir solid zirconia is indicated for crowns, bridges, implants, inlays & onlays and made of highest quality zirconia.
- **Porcelain-fused-to-metal** dental crowns can be color matched to your adjacent teeth (unlike the metallic crowns). However, more wearing to the opposing teeth occurs with this crown type compared with metal or resin crowns. The crown's porcelain portion can also chip or break off. Next to all-ceramic crowns, porcelain-fused-to-metal crowns look most like normal teeth. However, sometimes the metal underlying the crown's porcelain can show through as a dark line, especially at the gum line and even more so if your gums recede. These crowns can be a good choice for front or back teeth.
- **Metals** used in crowns include gold alloy, other alloys (for example, palladium) or a base-metal alloy (for example, nickel or chromium). Compared with other crown types, less tooth structure needs to be removed with metal crowns, and tooth wear to opposing teeth is kept to a minimum. Metal crowns withstand biting and chewing forces well and probably last the longest in terms of wear down. Also, metal crowns

rarely chip or break. The metallic color is the main drawback. Metal crowns are a good choice for out-of-sight molars.

- **Temporary versus permanent.** Temporary crowns can be made in your dentist's office whereas permanent crowns are made in a dental laboratory. Temporary crowns are made of acrylic or stainless steel and can be used as a temporary restoration until a permanent crown is constructed by the dental laboratory.

### **What does getting a crown involve?**

A crown procedure usually requires two appointments. Your first appointment will include taking several highly accurate molds (or impressions) that will be used to create your custom crown. A mold will also be used to create a temporary crown which will stay on your tooth for approximately two weeks until your new crown is fabricated by a dental laboratory. While the tooth is numb, the dentist will prepare the tooth by removing any decay and shaping the surface to properly fit the crown. Once these details are accomplished, your temporary crown will be placed with temporary cement and your bite will be checked to ensure you are biting properly. At your second appointment your temporary crown will be removed, the tooth will be cleaned, and your new crown will be carefully placed to ensure the spacing and bite are accurate. You will be given care instructions and encouraged to have regular dental visits to check your new crown.

### **How Should I Care for My Temporary Dental Crown?**

Because temporary dental crowns are just that -- a temporary fix until a permanent crown is ready, most dentists suggest that a few precautions be taken with your temporary crown. These include:

- Avoid sticky, chewy foods (for example, chewing gum, caramel), which have the potential of grabbing and pulling off the crown.
- Minimize use of the side of your mouth with the temporary crown. Shift the bulk of your chewing to the other side of your mouth.
- Avoid chewing hard foods (such as raw vegetables), which could dislodge or break the crown.
- Slide flossing material out-rather than lifting out-when cleaning your teeth. Lifting the floss out, as you normally would, might pull off the temporary crown.

### **Porcelain Fixed Bridges**

A dental bridge is a fixed (non-removable) appliance and is an excellent way to replace missing teeth. There are several types of bridges. You and

your dentist will discuss the best options for your particular case. The "traditional bridge" is the most popular type and is usually made of porcelain fused to metal. Porcelain fixed bridges are most popular because they resemble your natural teeth. This type of bridge consists to two crowns that go over two anchoring teeth (abutment teeth) and are attached to pontics (artificial teeth), filling the gap created by one or more missing teeth. Dental bridges are highly durable and will last many years, however they may need replacement or need to be re-cemented due to normal wear.

#### **Reasons for a fixed bridge:**

- Fill space of missing teeth.
- Maintain facial shape.
- Prevent remaining teeth from drifting out of position.
- Restore chewing and speaking ability.
- Restore your smile.
- Upgrade from a removable partial denture to a permanent dental appliance.

**What does getting a fixed bridge involve?** Getting a bridge usually requires two or more visits. While the teeth are numb, the two anchoring teeth are prepared by removing a portion of enamel to allow for a crown. Next, a highly accurate impression (mold) is made which will be sent to a dental laboratory where the bridge will be fabricated. In addition, a temporary bridge will be made and worn for several weeks until your next appointment. At the second visit, your permanent bridge will be carefully checked, adjusted, and cemented to achieve a proper fit. Occasionally your dentist may only temporarily cement the bridge, allowing your teeth and tissue time to get used to the new bridge. The new bridge will be permanently cemented at a later time. You will receive care instructions at the conclusion of your treatment. Proper brushing, flossing and regular dental visits will aid in the life of your new permanent bridge.

#### **Dental Veneers**

Dental veneers (sometimes called porcelain veneers or dental porcelain laminates) are wafer-thin, custom-made shells of tooth-colored materials designed to cover the front surface of teeth to improve your appearance. These shells are bonded to the front of the teeth changing their color, shape, size, or length creating a beautiful and attractive smile.

Dental veneers can be made from porcelain or from resin composite materials. Porcelain veneers resist stains better than resin veneers and better mimic the light reflecting properties of natural teeth. Resin veneers

are thinner and require removal of less of the tooth surface before placement. You will need to discuss the best choice of veneer material for you with your dentist.

They can often be alternatives to crowns and the ideal solution in treating many dental conditions. As with most dental restorations, veneers are not permanent and may someday need replacement. They are very durable and will last many years, giving you a beautiful long lasting smile.

#### **Reasons for porcelain veneers:**

- Cosmetically, to create a uniform, white, beautiful smile.
- Crooked teeth.
- Misshapen teeth.
- Severely discolored or stained teeth.
- Teeth that are too small or large.
- Unwanted or uneven spaces.
- Worn or chipped teeth.

**What does getting porcelain veneers involve?** Getting veneers usually requires two visits to complete the process, with little or no anesthesia required during the procedure. The teeth are prepared by lightly buffering and shaping the surface to allow for the thickness of the veneer. A mold or impression of the teeth is taken and a shade (color) will then be chosen by you and the dentist. On the second visit the teeth will be cleansed with special liquids to achieve a durable bond. Bonding cement is then placed between the tooth and veneer and a special light beam is used to harden and set the bond. You will receive care instructions for veneers. Proper brushing, flossing and regular dental visits will aid in the life of your new veneers.

#### **What Are the Advantages of Dental Veneers?**

Veneers offer the following advantages:

- They provide a natural tooth appearance.
- Gum tissue tolerates porcelain well.
- Porcelain veneers are stain resistant.
- The color of a porcelain veneer can be selected such that it makes dark teeth appear whiter.
- Veneers offer a conservative approach to changing a tooth's color and shape -- veneers generally don't require the extensive shaping prior to the procedure that crowns do, yet offer a stronger, more aesthetic alternative.

#### **What Are the Disadvantages of Dental Veneers?**

The downside to dental veneers include:

- The process is not reversible.
- Veneers are more costly than composite resin bonding.
- Veneers are usually not repairable should they chip or crack.
- Because enamel has been removed, your tooth may become more sensitive to hot and cold foods and beverages.
- Veneers may not exactly match the color of your other teeth. Also, the veneer's color cannot be altered once in place. If you plan on whitening your teeth, you need to do so before getting veneers.
- Though not likely, veneers can dislodge and fall off. To minimize the chance of this occurring, do not bite your nails; chew on pencils, ice, or other hard objects; or otherwise put excessive pressure on your teeth.
- Teeth with veneers can still experience decay, possibly necessitating full coverage of the tooth with a crown.
- Veneers are not a good choice for individuals with unhealthy teeth (for example, those with decay or active gum disease), weakened teeth (as a result of decay, fracture, large dental fillings), or for those who have an inadequate amount of existing enamel on the tooth surface.
- Individuals who clench and grind their teeth are poor candidates for porcelain veneers, as these activities can cause the veneers to crack or chip.

### **How Long Do Dental Veneers Last?**

Veneers generally last between 5 and 10 years. After this time, the veneers would need to be replaced.

### **Do Dental Veneers Require Special Care?**

Dental veneers do not require any special care. Continue to follow good oral hygiene practices including brushing and flossing as you normally would.

Even though porcelain veneers resist stains, your dentist may recommend that you avoid stain-causing foods and beverages (for example, coffee, tea, or red wine).

### **Are There Alternatives to Dental Veneers?**

Yes, alternatives to veneers include bonding and crowns. Veneers offer a nice intermediate option. Veneers may be best suited for individuals who want to change the shape of their teeth more than just a little bit -- as is done with bonding -- but not enough to require a crown.

### **Tooth Whitening**

Tooth whitening (or bleaching) is a simple, non-invasive dental treatment used to change the color of natural tooth enamel and is an ideal way to enhance the beauty of your smile. Because having whiter teeth has now

become the number one aesthetic concern of most patients, there are a number of ways to whiten teeth. The most popular method is using a home tooth whitening system that will whiten teeth dramatically. Since tooth whitening only works on natural tooth enamel, it is important to evaluate replacement of any old fillings, crowns, etc. Replacement of any restorations will be done after bleaching so they will match the newly bleached teeth. Tooth whitening is not permanent. A touch-up maybe needed every several years, and more often if you smoke, drink coffee, tea, or wine.

#### **Reasons for tooth whitening:**

- Fluorosis (excessive fluoridation during tooth development).
- Normal wear of outer tooth layer.
- Stained teeth due to medications (tetracycline, etc.).
- Yellow, brown stained teeth.

**What does tooth whitening involve?** This type of tooth whitening usually requires two visits. At the first appointment, impressions (molds) will be made of your teeth to fabricate custom, clear plastic, trays. At your second appointment, you will try on the trays for proper fit, and adjustments will be made if necessary. The trays are worn with special whitening solution either twice a day for 30 minutes or overnight for a couple of weeks depending on the degree of staining and desired level of whitening. It is normal to experience tooth sensitivity during the time you are whitening your teeth, but it will subside shortly after you have stopped bleaching. You will receive care instructions for your teeth and trays, and be encouraged to visit your dentist regularly to help maintain a beautiful, healthy, white smile.

#### **Dentures & Partial Dentures**

A denture is a removable dental appliance replacement for missing teeth and surrounding tissue. They are made to closely resemble your natural teeth and may even enhance your smile. There are two types of dentures - *complete* and *partial*/dentures. Complete dentures are used when all of the teeth are missing, while partial dentures are used when some natural teeth remain. A Partial denture not only fills in the spaces created by missing teeth, it prevents other teeth from shifting. A Complete denture may be either "*conventional*" or "*immediate*." A conventional type is made after the teeth have been removed and the gum tissue has healed, usually taking 4 to 6 weeks. During this time the patient will go without teeth. Immediate dentures are made in advance and immediately placed after the teeth are removed, thus preventing the patient from having to be without

teeth during the healing process. Once the tissues shrink and heal, adjustments will have to be made. Dentures are very durable appliances and will last many years, but may have to be remade, repaired, or readjusted due to normal wear.

#### **Reasons for dentures:**

- Complete Denture - Loss of all teeth in an arch.
- Partial Denture - Loss of several teeth in an arch.
- Enhancing smile and facial tissues.
- Improving chewing, speech, and digestion.

**What does getting dentures involve?** The process of getting dentures requires several appointments, usually over several weeks. Highly accurate impressions (molds) and measurements are taken and used to create your custom denture. Several "try-in" appointments may be necessary to ensure proper shape, color, and fit. At the final appointment, your dentist will precisely adjust and place the completed denture, ensuring a natural and comfortable fit. It is normal to experience increased saliva flow, some soreness, and possible speech and chewing difficulty, however this will subside as your muscles and tissues get used to the new dentures. You will be given care instructions for your new dentures. Proper cleaning of your new dental appliance, good oral hygiene, and regular dental visits will aid in the life of your new dentures.

#### **Denture Care**

Dentures today are made from very advanced materials designed to give you a natural appearance.

However, keep in mind that just like your teeth, dentures should be cared for with the same diligence. This means daily brushing and regular visits to your dentist.

Regular visits to your dentist are critical. Your dentist also can make minor adjustments that ensure that your dentures continue fitting naturally and comfortably.

Just like natural teeth, dentures need to be cleansed of plaque, food particles and other debris. Keeping your dentures in top shape will also help keep the soft tissues of your mouth healthy; an unclean or malformed denture can cause infections and irritation.

#### **Cleaning Techniques**

Remember to rinse and brush your dentures after every meal, and soak them in denture solution overnight. This also allows your gums to breathe while you sleep.

Here are some simple techniques for keeping your dentures clean:

- People can brush their dentures in a variety of ways. Some people use soap and water or a slightly abrasive toothpaste. Popular denture pastes and creams also can be used.
- Avoid using highly abrasive chemicals or pastes, or vigorously brushing with hard bristled toothbrushes. These can scratch or even crack dentures.
- Hold your dentures gently to avoid loosening a tooth.
- Clean your dentures with cool or tepid water over a water-filled sink. Hot water may warp a denture. A small washcloth placed in the bottom of the bowl will ensure that your denture isn't damaged if it falls.
- Soak your dentures overnight in any commercially available product like Effervescent or Polident, and remember to rinse your dentures before placing them back in your mouth.
- Remember to use a separate toothbrush to clean your own natural teeth, as well as all of your gum tissues. In lieu of a toothbrush, a soft washcloth may be used to wipe your gums.

Over time, even daily care of your dentures may require them to be cleaned by the dentist. A powerful ultrasonic cleaner may be used to remove hard accumulations of tartar and other substances.

### Root Canal Therapy

Root canal therapy is needed when the nerve of a tooth is affected by decay or infection. In order to save the tooth, the pulp (the living tissue inside the tooth), nerves, bacteria, and any decay are removed and the resulting space is filled with special, medicated, dental materials, which restore the tooth to its full function. Having a root canal done on a tooth is the treatment of choice to save a tooth that otherwise would die and have to be removed. Many patients believe that removing a tooth that has problems is the solution, but what is not realized is that extracting (pulling) a tooth will ultimately be more costly and cause significant problems for adjacent teeth. Root canal treatment is highly successful and usually lasts a lifetime, although on occasion, a tooth will have to be retreated due to new infections.

#### **Signs and symptoms for possible root canal therapy:**

- An abscess (or pimple) on the gums.
- Sensitivity to hot and cold.
- Severe toothache pain.
- Sometimes no symptoms are present. Swelling and/or tenderness.

#### **Reasons for root canal therapy:**

- Decay has reached the tooth pulp (the living tissue inside the tooth).

- Infection or abscess have developed inside the tooth or at the root tip.
- Injury or trauma to the tooth.

**What does root canal therapy involve?** A root canal procedure requires one or more appointments and can be performed by a dentist or endodontist (a root canal specialist). While the tooth is numb, a rubber dam (a sheet of rubber) will be placed around the tooth to keep it dry and free of saliva. An access opening is made on top of the tooth and a series of root canal files are placed into the opening, one at a time, removing the pulp, nerve tissue, and bacteria. If tooth decay is present, it will also be removed with special dental instruments. Once the tooth is thoroughly cleaned, it will be sealed with either a permanent filling or, if additional appointments are needed, a temporary filling will be placed. At the next appointment, usually a week later, the roots and the inside cavity of the tooth will be filled and sealed with special dental materials. A filling will be placed to cover the opening on top of the tooth. In addition, all teeth that have root canal treatment should have a crown (cap) placed. This will protect the tooth and prevent it from breaking, and restore it to its full function. After treatment, your tooth may still be sensitive, but this will subside as the inflammation diminishes and the tooth has healed. You will be given care instructions after each appointment. Good oral hygiene practices and regular dental visits will aid in the life of your root canal treatment.

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Dr. Tara Moshiri is a Cosmetic Sterling, VA Dentist achieving smile makeovers with porcelain crowns and veneers and tooth whitening. She also uses air abrasion technology for achieving minimally invasive restorations.

## Tara Moshiri DDS - Sterling, VA Cosmetic Dentist

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